

undisturbed Washo culture. Some of the descriptions in this paper refer to recent happenings; these are presented as generally illustrative of aboriginal Washo culture because they are so regarded by our informants.

1

Supernatural power can come from the deer, rattlesnake, water, "water-baby" (a small, white, manlike creature that lives in streams, springs and lakes), bear and eagle. One informant (Hank Pete) also mentioned the weasel, a black spider, lizard, magpie, storm and any kind of snake. Another informant (Henry Rupert) mentioned blood. Rattlesnake, water-baby and eagle are considered particularly powerful. Power is cumulative: several relatively weak powers can be combined to overcome a power stronger than any of them alone. The Washo call both the sources of power and the power itself wegeléyu, and the term also denotes the implements used by a shaman in the curing ceremony.

When listing the sources of supernatural power, the Washo think in terms of the kinds of power that can be controlled by shamans. All of the sources of supernatural power listed above can bestow the ability to control their powers. However, power is not confined to these sources; it is probably a feature of many of the plants and animals the Washo depended upon for food. This opinion is based on the reported consequences for breaking the rules regarding the handling of native food. The person who breaks the rules becomes ill, apparently because of the power inherent in the offended food. For example, mistreatment of the pinenuts at the time of the annual pinenut dance can result in illness caused by the intrusion of a pinenut into the person.

Supernatural power becomes attached to particular men and women. The individual has no control over this. As the Washo say, "The wegeléyu picks the man." Power can neither be bought, inherited, nor acquired from another person, but comes unsolicited in dreams. When this happens, a person either learns to use the power and becomes a shaman or else he hires a shaman to rid him of the power, for to have power and no knowledge of its control results in illness. While wegeléyu comes to only a few, it seems that all people have a kind of low intensity power which is not wegeléyu. This kind of power increases in strength with age so that old people are treated with caution. Wegeléyu, however, does not increase in strength with age, but older people are thought to be more likely to acquire wegeléyu than younger ones.

Some of the powers confer special abilities. A man with deer (or fawn) wegeléyu can control the weather. Henry Rupert, the only living Washo